

snails email



# REVERIE



a nonprofit  
omori fanzine  
all donations  
go to Stop  
AAPI





**REVERIE is a fanzine for the 2020 psychological horror game OMORI. all copyright for the game itself belongs to OMOCAT. although some visuals from the game have been replicated, none of OMORI's assets have been used in the creation of REVERIE.**

**this zine is non-profit, but viewers have an option to pay what they see fit. none of the money from these sales will go to contributors; we are donating all proceeds to the stop AAPI hate organisation, which you can read more about at <https://stopaapihate.org/> . donations are completely optional, but much appreciated.**

**this zine contains spoilers for the whole of OMORI, and thus there is content that some viewers may find upsetting. trigger warning for drawn depictions of blood and gore, as well as general content and mentions of mental illness (depression/anxiety), suicide, nightmares, general horror, and spiders.**

**find the mod team on twitter at @marispicnic and @snailsemail, and the zine and its contributors at @omorizine.**



# A MESSAGE FROM THE MODS:

we love OMORI.

we loved the idea when we saw it on kickstarter (in, like, 2015), and we love the game now, over six months after its release. through this game, we've been able to make so many new friends, and see and share so much incredible content with other fans.

meg decided way back in january that they'd love to see a zine focused on the game, enlisted bowie to help moderate it, and both mods were soon met with a host of incredible contributors that loved the game just as much as they did and were willing to make this idea a reality.

turns out - making a zine is a LOT of work, and we can't thank everyone involved in the process enough. we'd like to extend a huge thank you to all of the wonderful artists and writers involved in the zine for creating such incredible pieces and being endlessly patient as we navigated the ins and outs (and seemingly unending delays) of being first time zine mods.

this zine is an absolute labour of love - there have been tons upon tons of late-night calls with chaotic soundtracks and questionable progress shots, and miraculously it eventually formed into this final project.

we're incredibly proud of it, and hope you guys love it as much as we do.

-meg and bowie

BOWIE  
@snailsemail  
she/her

MEG  
@marispicnic  
they/them







What would you like to view?





WHITE SPACE

HEADSPACE

FARAWAY TOWN



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**PG 15**  
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**PG 16**  
**art by SPOOK.**

**PG 17**  
**art by SHELLY.**

**PG 18**  
**art by E.**

**START**



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**REVERIE'S INDEX**



**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about FLOWERS.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about MY FRIENDS.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about SPACE.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about a VIOLIN.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about STAIRS.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about TREES.**

**DAY ???**

**today i dreamt  
about SPIDERS.**

**DAY ???**

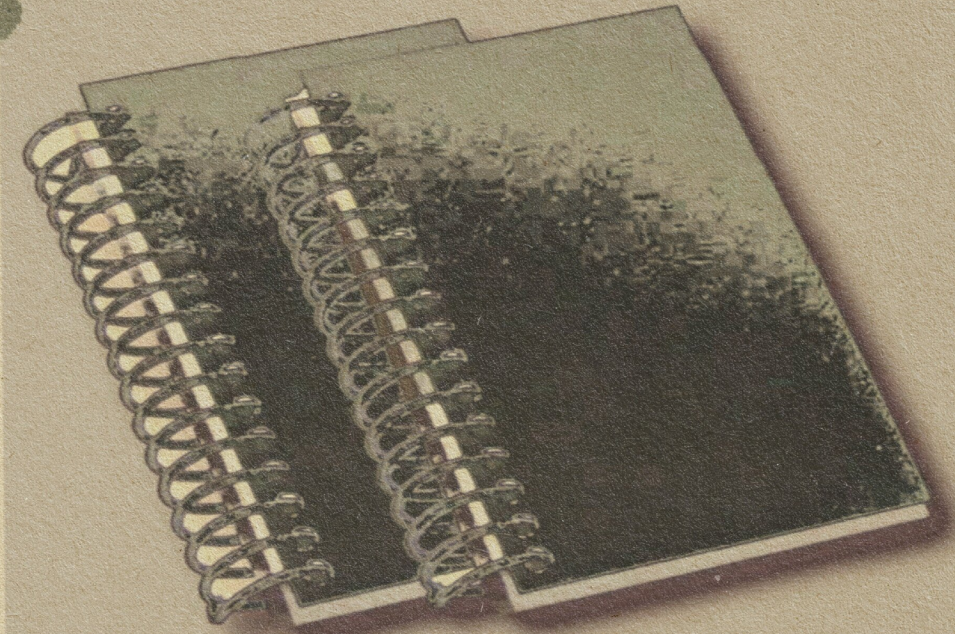
**today i dreamt  
about M A R I .**

**0:00 AM**

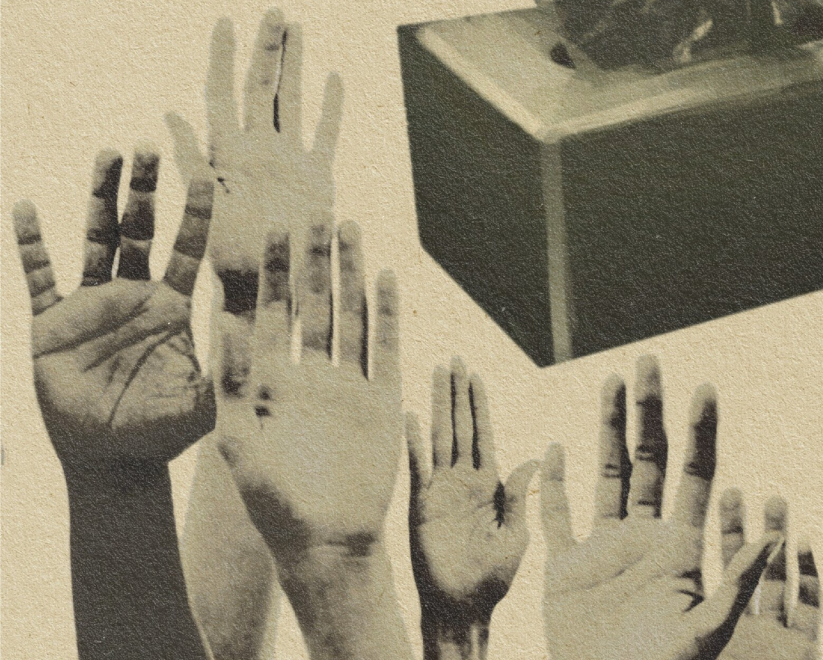
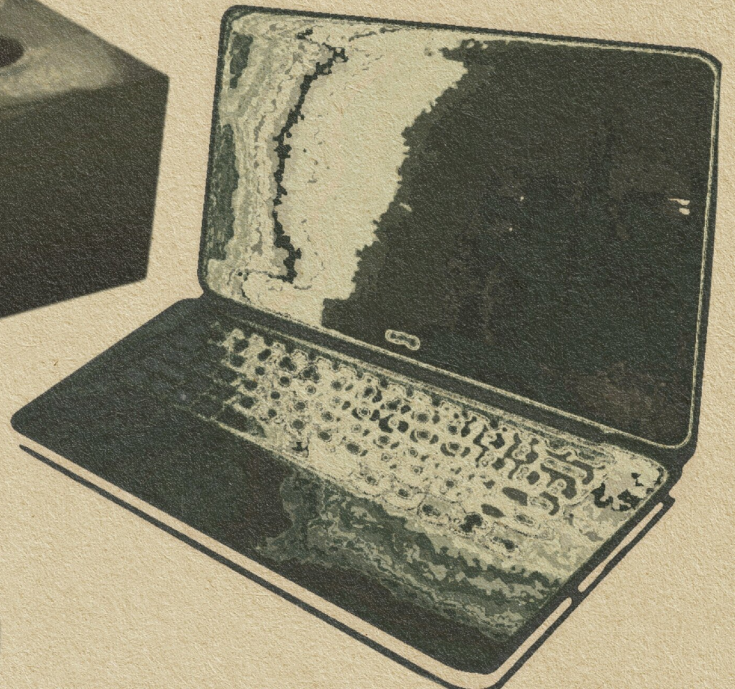


# WHITESPACE

you've been here for as long as you can remember

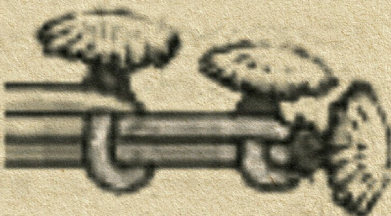
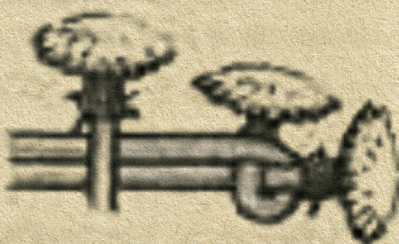
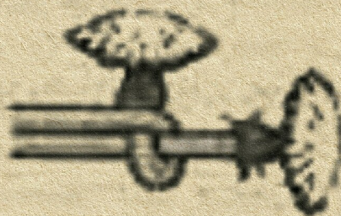
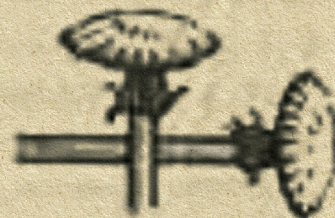
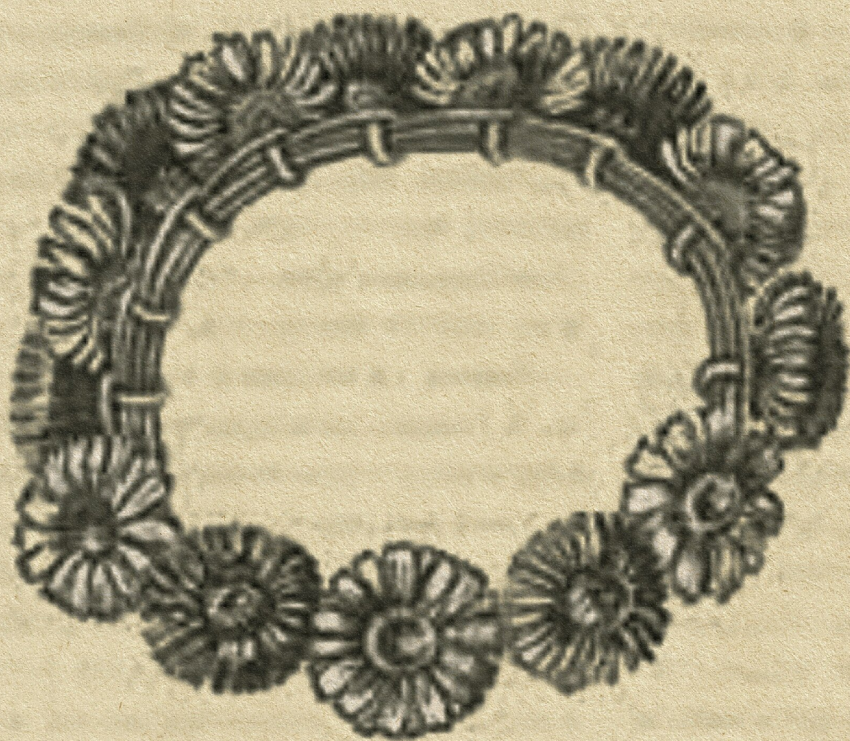


WAITING FOR  
SOMETHING TO HAPPEN?



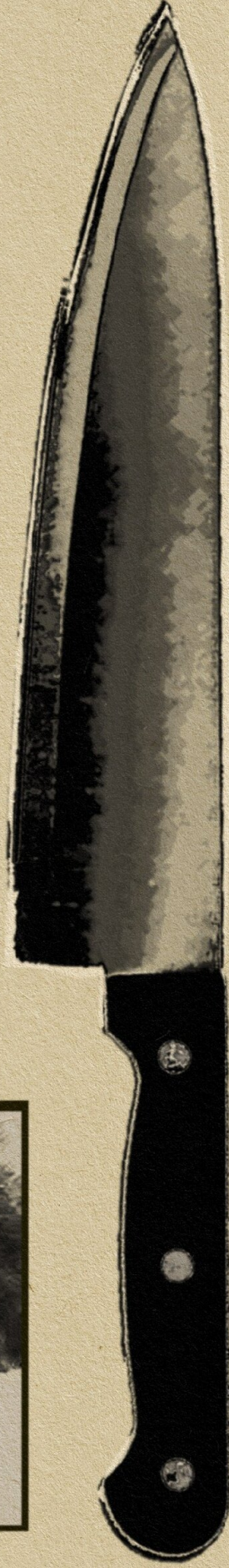


a home for flowers.





**TODAY I SPENT  
TIME IN WHITE  
SPACE.  
EVERYTHING  
WAS OKAY**



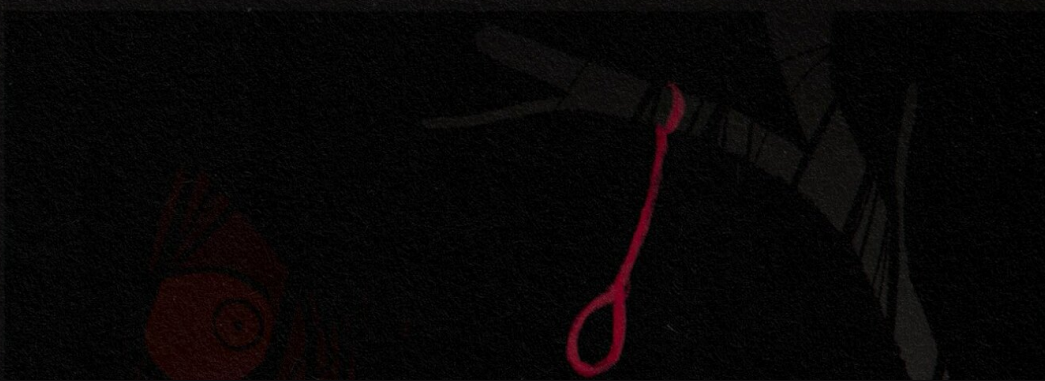


everything will be okay



K







**welcome to whitespace.....**



**you've been here for as long as you can remember.**







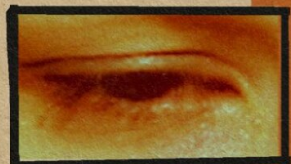




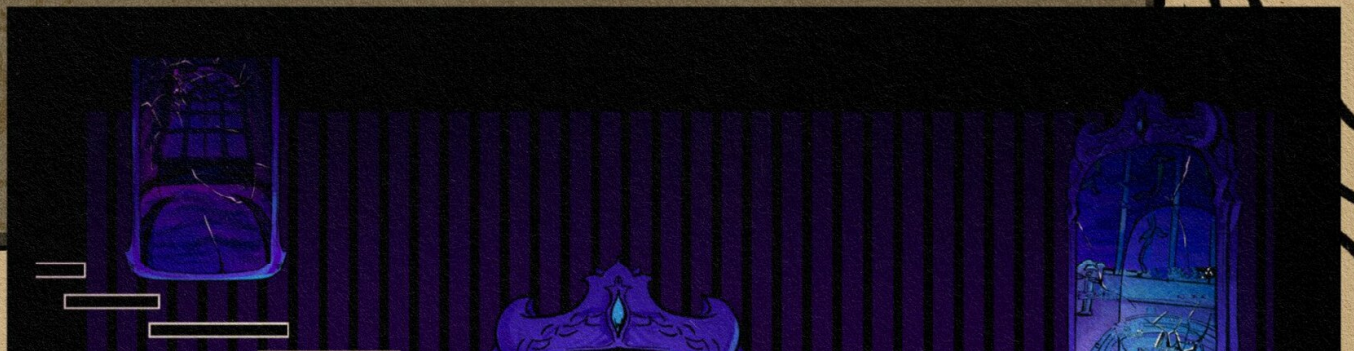
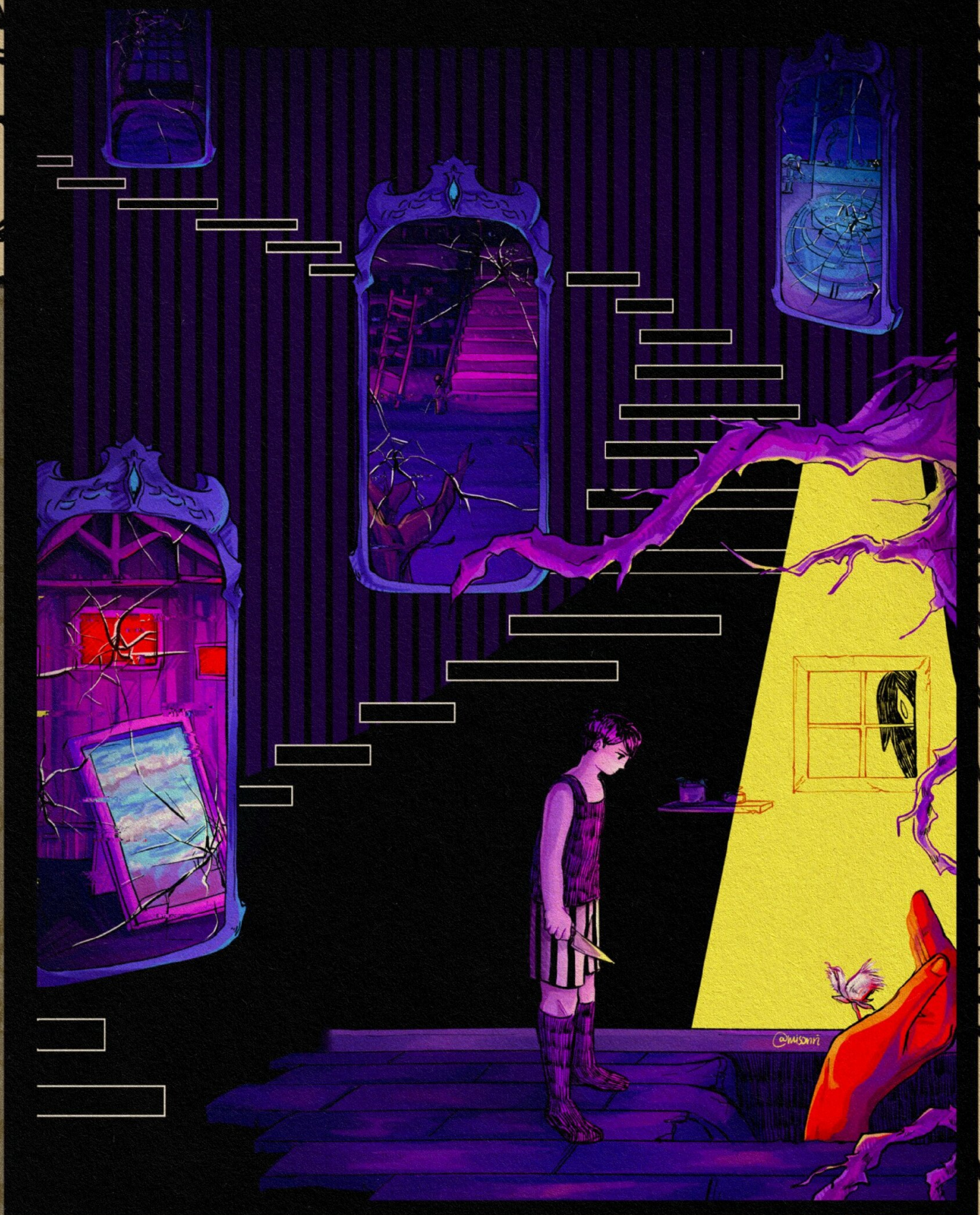




"something fell nearby."













A black and white photograph of a hand pointing its index finger towards the word "STAB". The hand and the word are white against a solid black rectangular background. The entire scene is framed by a thin white border, which is itself set within a larger dark red border.

STAB





**stab who?**





# headspace

carry on, DREAMER.  
you're the only one who can





"My thoughts will follow you into your dreams."



# DREAMER'S CLOCKWORK

by AKOCE

Sunny always dreamed.

Each night, as his head rested on his pillow, as he heard his sister's breathing even, Sunny kept his eyes open, eyeing the door, the light filtering from underneath a strange comfort. He clung onto it, gripping his sheets tight and curling himself into a fetal position when he heard whispers behind it, until finally the lights went out.

Even then, Sunny didn't dare close his eyes, holding onto the phantom remains of the glow as darkness surrounded him, suffocating. Maybe if he looked hard enough, he could pretend that the lightbulb was still on and that nothing else was there with him.

The rustling of leaves, the crickets chirping rhythmically and - what Sunny hated most - the faint whistle of the wind, paired with the chill of the night made it seem as if there were ghosts mocking him, cursing him in a language far beyond humans' comprehension. Time and time again he had wanted to retaliate, beg them to leave him alone, but a shuffle to his right would stop him.

He didn't want to wake up Mari.

Haunted by the chant of phantoms in the void of his room, Sunny stayed quiet.

Each night without fail his eyelids would grow heavier and heavier until they closed without him noticing.

His days may have ended with his fears materializing and tormenting him, yet each morning it would seem a distant nightmare when he woke up to a kind smile and a hug, a reminder that Mari was still there for him. However, affection could not always alleviate the heavy feeling in his chest. As the day went on, his thoughts grew increasingly more hectic, and the horrors began to seep in bright daylight.

Eyes staring from tree barks. Hands reaching out from the corners of the room. A cackling overshadowing the teacher's mundane lessons. Buzzing whispers drowning his ears as his friends conversed.

He skipped dinner once he came back from school. The lights would stay on much longer if he went to bed early, and he knew no one but his sister would question his behavior. He hid under the covers, fixated on the bottom of the door as if it were his lifeline. The room seemed to gradually get darker, until no light was left for him to cling onto. He braced himself for the familiar cacophony, breath shuddering in morbid anticipation, but nothing came. Sunny waited, heart beating frantically in his chest, trying desperately to stay quiet. Still, nothing came.

He let out a sigh, and immediately raised his shaky hands to cover his mouth.



In the midst of the void he was in, he could sense it. Something behind him, all around him. An inky exterior pointing at him, beckoning him with sweet words like nails on chalkboard. All teeth and smiles, all empty eyes that followed even the slightest stir. Sunny couldn't move, couldn't make noise.

For Mari.

It called after him again, and his breathing quickened. He stayed still, hoping it would go away. It reached out, obtuse shapes that morphed into familiar faces, obscured and wrong. They all reprimanded him. He closed his tearful eyes, then peeked with one eye looking straight into it, into his own disturbingly blank face, peering back at him.

He cried out, scrambling away. His reflection smiled, grinning to its temples, then frowned. Crinkled eyes turned downwards, down, down, alongside its mouth.

Sunny tried to run, to no avail. He tried to scream, but nothing would come out. He tried to move, but he was locked in place, transfixed into looking at his own distorted facial expressions. In the distance, he thought he could hear humming disrupting the suffocating silence. Gentle whispers and soft lullabies slowly filled his ears.

«Take a deep breath...»

Sunny closed his eyes, the image of his own crooked face ingrained in his mind.

«Don't be afraid.»

He pictured Mari, long black hair flowing in the wind behind her, standing strong in warrior armor, sword in hand and standing off against it.

She raised her voice, proudly declaring she would rid the world of the monster, bringing back the brother it had stolen from her.

«It's not as scary as you think.»

He took a deep inhale, and exhaled.

He repeated the process several times, his breath steadying with each time. Until finally, he opened his eyes. His sister stood heroically in front of him, the mirror figure nowhere to be seen. She approached him and kneeled.

«I'm proud of you, Sunny.»

That night and the following, Sunny dreamed of adventures and playgrounds, and woke up each time to a hand combing through his hair and a promise.

-

Sunny only dreams.

He wakes up everyday in his room, welcomed by different variations of sunlight filtering in through his window, or by a lack thereof. If the sun is up, he goes to the bathroom, picks up whatever food his mom left him, and goes back. If it's evening, he doesn't bother. He goes back to sleep.

He knows that somewhere in the haze that has become his life, Kel visits, bringing him assignments and promises that he knows he can never fulfill. He brings Hero with him once, his mother tells him one day in a hopeful tone. Aubrey visits at first, then abruptly stops. Basil never comes.

It doesn't matter. He doesn't know these people.



He has never left his room for longer than necessary, yet whenever he comes back from the bathroom, his heart is pounding, his mind is screaming. He thinks he can see something out of the corner of his eyes - but it doesn't matter, no one is there for him. He climbs into his bed, glancing at his room one more time. The potted plant in the corner is still there. The ceiling fan remains motionless.

Omori wakes up in White Space.

He is laying on the floor, staring at the hanging black light bulb. His eyes follow the length of the wire, seemingly unending. He sits up, there is a laptop, a sketchbook and a tissue box besides him. He stands up, walking over to the black kitten dozing off right outside his space, and reaches down to pet her. Mewo purrs, cocking her head when he takes away his hand.

«Waiting for something to happen?» he can almost hear her meow.

He turns his head towards the white door across from them, and sluggishly heads towards it. He knows what he will find, his friends, his real friends, playing cards and waiting for him. He can't see a faint yellow light surrounding him, but he can almost feel it. He squints his eyes as he opens the door and enters the room, slowly adjusting to the burst of colours. A familiar face runs up to him, excitedly greeting him.

He follows through his routine, helping Aubrey find her stuffed toy, watching as she bickers with Kel, Hero intervening with an exasperated expression.

He doesn't bother looking around the Neighbor's room, heading straight towards the exit. The Snake looks expectedly at him.

«Going out, Omori?» it asks with a slight hiss. He nods, and accepts the Clams he is given.

He climbs up the stairs with his friends in tow, and out of the tree stump. Once he is out, he raises his arm to shield his eyes and immediately brings it down. The sky is beautiful, he knows there is nothing in it that could harm him. He heads down past the trees and towards the laughter he can hear further ahead. He stops once the view is clear, and takes everything in. Everyone's playing, enjoying themselves.

He redirects his attention to the picnic to his right. That's where she is.

He runs enthusiastically to her, and sits on the patterned napkin.

«Oh, hello everyone! How are you all doing today?» Mari smiles

Omori leans forward within her reach, she ruffles his hair. Besides her, Basil giggles.

He feels safe.



Sunny won't dream again.

When he will have moved to his new house, away from the shackles of the familiar walls that surrounded him everyday of his life, he will spend hours on his bed, sitting still, not having slept since he woke up from The Accident; and though he will know it is due to a multitude of reasons, he will pretend for just one instant that it was Omori's doing, that the monochrome boy wanted to give him peace of mind before inevitably meeting him again and impassively pointing out each and every single of his insecurities, which he knows he will not be able to overcome as well as last time.

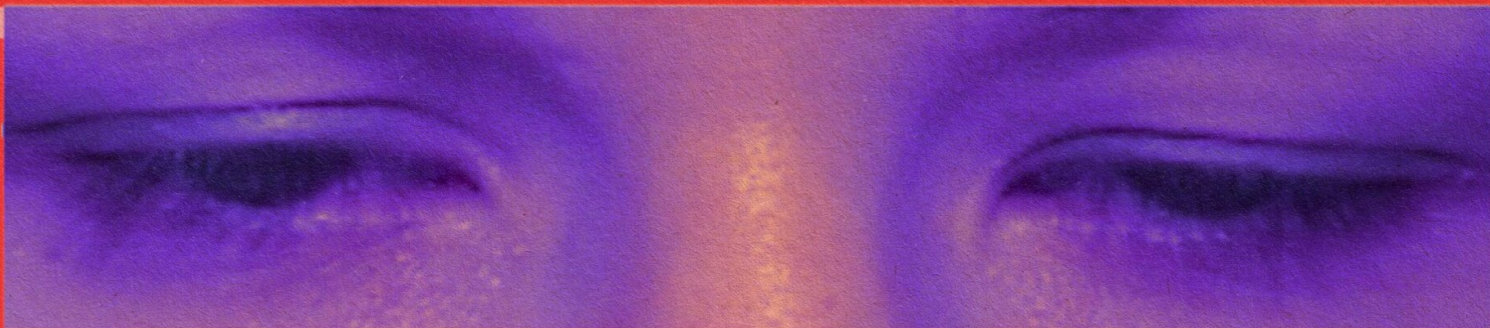
«Omori is gone,» a voice in the back of his head will repeat. The irony of this thought will bring a slight smile to his face, and he will sigh before finally laying down on his bed.

He will wake up to the sight of walls surrounding him, tainted with color. The sound of traffic and chirping just outside his window will reach his ears, and though he will feel well rested, he won't remember his dreams, or whether he dreamed at all.

Sunny won't see Omori.













# EVERY NIGHT

by HENRY

I.

The blunt, freezing wind whips past Kel as he moves, singeing his skin with a fearsome frost. With each step his bare feet disappear into the snow. He takes slow, broad steps, keeping his arms out to his side to maintain his balance. Icy cold fingers brush against his skin as a hand grabs for his shirt. Kel turns and sees Sunny, barely visible in the fierce snowstorm. Sunny inches through the snow and grips to Kel's shirt like a lifeline. Kel offers him a smile. Sunny gives him a weak half-smile in return.

«I can't feel my arms anymore!» Aubrey shouts. She trudges along at Kel's right, gripping her arms at their sides. «Seriously, who wants to have a picnic all the way up here?!»

«Patience, child!» barks a voice. Kel turns to see Pinkbeard looming behind them, making deep impressions in the snow with each step. «The cold cannot harm you. March forth, with the confidence of a thousand stars!»

So cool, Kel thinks.

Soon enough the snow gives way to two figures and a picnic blanket. Hero is carving fine details into a massive snow castle. Mari watches him from the blanket, chatting and laughing with him as he works. The two notice the group approaching and turn to them, waving hello.

«Mari! Hero!» calls Aubrey. She darts up ahead, diving into Mari for a big hug. Kel follows her, stopping just short of knocking over Hero's castle. Basil, standing where Sunny once stood, follows close behind.

«So impressive,» says Basil. He plucks a flower from his hair and sticks it into one of the castle's towers. «How long did this take you, Hero?» Hero's answer is interrupted by a snowball, pelting Kel directly in the ear. Kel holds his ear and shouts, «Aw, what the heck, Aubrey?!»

Aubrey clutches another snowball and sticks her tongue out. «C'mon Kel, have a snowball fight with me!»

«I can't,» says Kel. «Capt. Spaceboy is up ahead. I don't wanna keep him waiting.» «Whatever.» Aubrey flops down onto the blanket next to Mari and grins at her. Mari smiles back.

The vast expanse in front of Kel gives way to a sheer cliff, dropping off into an abyss of bitter white. Capt. Spaceboy stands at its edge, cape billowing in the wind. Kel approaches him. His steps drag, as though he's walking through mud.

«Kel,» says Capt. Spaceboy, «I knew I could count on you.»

Kel struggles against himself as he continues to move. In a burst of speed, he reaches Spaceboy's side. «Always!» he says.



«Are you ready? This journey is going to be a long one.»

«Where are we going?»

Capt. Spaceboy peers over the edge of the cliff. Kel's eyes follow. «It's a vast frontier down there.»

«That's a big fall.»

«The biggest. Don't be afraid, my friend. I'll be by your side.»

«You promise?»

«I promise.»

Capt. Spaceboy takes Kel's hand. Together, they run forth, and leap off the edge.

II.

It's the height of noon on a warm summer day, and everything is beautiful. Sunlight filters through the trees and tickles Hero's face as he leans back and admires the weather. Mari squeezes his hand and smiles at him. Aubrey and Kel are still picking at the food laid out on the picnic blanket, while Sunny and Basil are chattering with one another, growing sleepy in the midsummer haze.

«Isn't it such a perfect day for a picnic?» says Mari. Her voice soothes Hero from the inside out. «I'm so glad everyone could come today.»

«I habe shoccer practishe chomorrow,» says Kel, shoving another spoonful of sweet gelatin dessert into his mouth.

Aubrey pushes him, making a face. «Don't talk with your mouth full! It's gross!»

Kel flicks his spoon at Aubrey. Aubrey screams and pushes him away again.

«Hey, don't fight,» says Hero. «We're here to have fun, so don't fight.»

«Sorry, Hero,» replies Aubrey.

Kel chews for a moment. He looks thoughtful. «I was wondering,» he says. «What's gelatin made of?»

An odd sense of déjà vu washes over Hero. Mari laughs and smiles next to him. Her patience and sweet amusement calm him in an instant. «Well, Kel!» she says. «Gelatin is made of... gelatin!»

«It's made by boiling pork skin or bones,»

Hero chimes in. «... I think.»

Aubrey makes a face. «Gross!»

«I... guess sometimes food comes from weird places like that!» says Mari.

«What's weird is that Hero knew that,» says Kel, «considering he's such a fucking idiot!»

Hero's mind reels. Kel laughs at him as he turns to Mari, confused by Kel's outburst, but she's laughing too. They're all laughing now. The noise drowns out his thoughts and grates at his ears.

«What--»

Thunk! A cold metal bat smacks against the side of Hero's head and he falls back, hissing in pain. He opens his eyes and Aubrey is standing over him. She lifts up her foot and stomps on his face. «Yeah, Hero! What's your problem?»

Hero rolls over, recoiling away from Aubrey. He sees Sunny, curled up and quiet as usual, sitting next to Mari's crumpled corpse. As he registers the sight, Kel rams his foot into Hero's stomach. He gags and heaves.

Sunny smiles. «It's funny because you deserve it,» he says.



«C'mon, get up!» Aubrey yells. She rears her bat and bashes it into Hero's skull. He screams in agony. «What's wrong? Hero, what's wrong?»

«Hero,» says Mari. Her voice echoes through his entire body. He chokes and writhes.

«Hero.»

Hands grasp and tug at Hero's withering body. They roll him over onto his back. Basil is sitting on top of him, and with small, pale hands he reaches forward and grasps Hero's throat, strangling him. Hero's vision blurs as he's overcome by his own pain and the sticky pull of his own blood. Basil gives him a warm, gentle smile.

Mari calls for him. «Hero. Hero. Hero.»

Sunny whispers into Hero's ear. «You deserve it. Hero.»

Kel laughs so hard he snorts. Aubrey makes some comment to him, but Hero can hardly hear her. As he wavers in and out of consciousness, something sharp stabs into his stomach, and he--

III.

Their party is so large, they have to drag over two extra tables just to fit everyone. The chairs are kind of uncomfortable, but Aubrey doesn't mind--there's something special and kind of nostalgic about eating in the Gino's dining room, surrounded by all of her friends. There's nowhere in the world that's safer than here.

To her left sits Kim, and to her right, Kel, shoving pizza down his gullet like his life depends on it. His greatest rival is Vance, to Kim's left, whose second greatest joy in life is enjoying the greasy spoils of Faraway's hometown pizzeria. Across from them is Hero, next to Sunny, next to Basil. Hero pats Sunny's head as Sunny nibbles away at a slice. Basil is half caught between stacking a small collection of plastic cups and watching Kel consume all in his path.

«Are you sure it's okay to eat so much junk food?» Basil asks. «Basketball tryouts are soon!»

«It'sh fine, I'll be fine,» says Kel. «A little pisssha never shtopped me!»

Aubrey wrinkles her nose at him. Gross.

Beside Basil is Angel, talking and waving his hands at Charlie. Across from them is THE MAVERICK. With a flip of his hair he butts into their conversation, proclaiming--

«HEY!!!» he screams, whipping around to face Kel. «YOU LOATHSOME BEAST! You got PIZZA GREASE on my SHIRT! It's... it's a really nice shirt!»

Kel points a pizza slice at him. THE MAVERICK recoils away. «Hey,» Kel says, «you got your shirt on my pizza grease.»

«YOU FOOL!!!!»

Angel rushes over to the other side of the table to comfort THE MAVERICK and scold Kel. Basil looks on with confusion more than anything. Sunny smiles, Hero laughs, and Kim laughs louder.

«That stupid shirt, Mav! What did I tell you about the shirt!»

«SH-SHUT UP!!!!»

Kim snickers and leans into Aubrey, whispering something into her ear. Aubrey cracks up. It's the funniest thing she's ever heard.



She turns to face Kim, and now Mari is sitting there, grinning at her. Her bright purple hair and radiant smile stand out against everything around her. «It's so nice to see you again, Aubrey,» she says. «I missed you a lot.» «I missed you too,» says Aubrey, a smile finally tugging at her lips. «College must be so difficult. But hey--it was really cool that you got to go to the moon!»

«It was cool! Did you know that they keep sheep on the moon?»

«What do they need sheep for?»

«So that they can count, of course!»

The evening carries on, wild and carefree. Hero deescalates Kel and THE MAVERICK's conflict from breaking into an all-out brawl while Sunny and Basil make odd sculptures with the cups. Aubrey and Mari feast on delicious pizza and talk about nothing in particular. Charlie queues up the jukebox, and together they all get up and dance.

«Hey Aubrey,» Mari says. «There's something I want to tell you.»

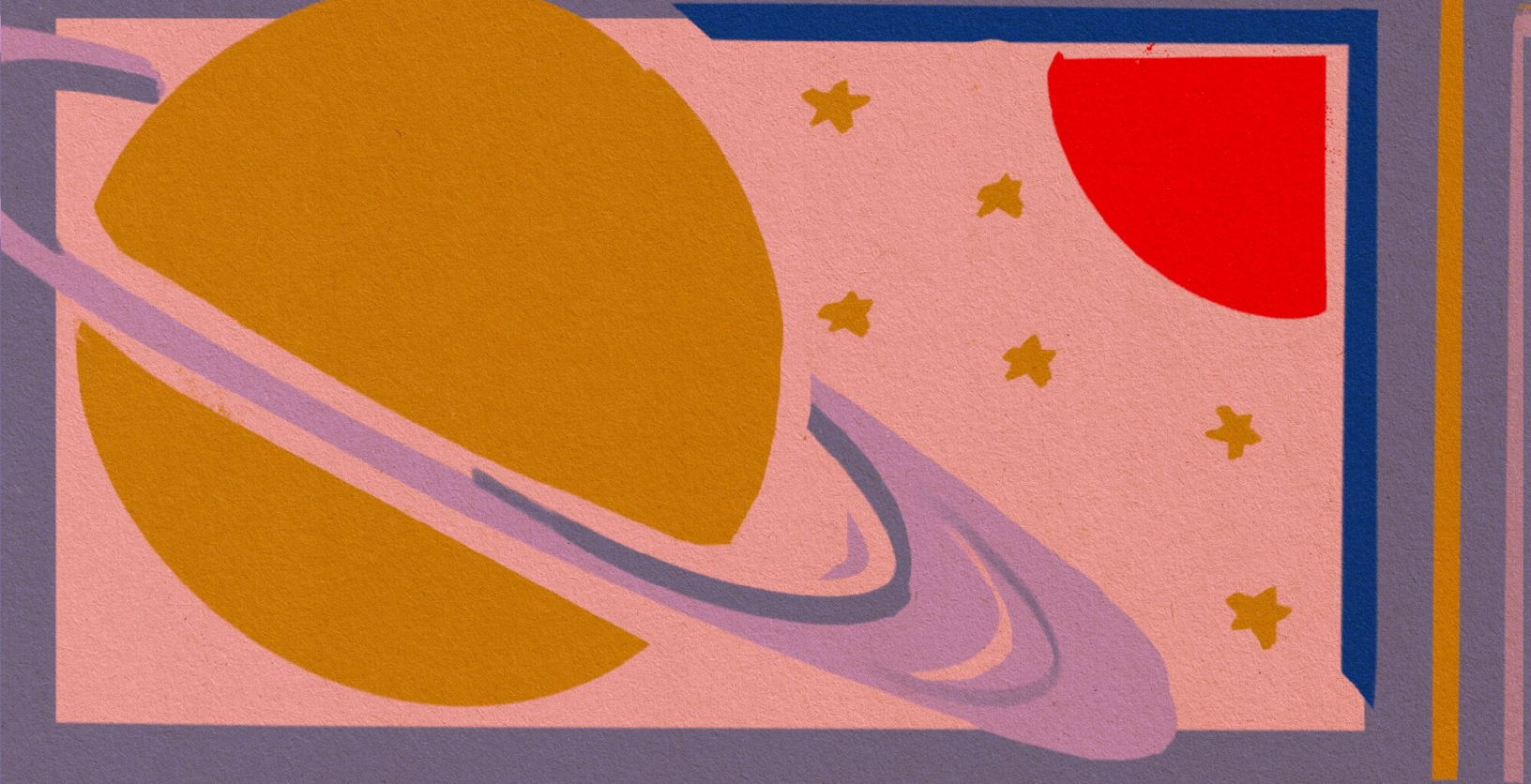
Aubrey wakes up.

The dank ceiling beams of the attic are always a disorienting sight as she wakes, struggling to emerge from the reverie of her dreams. The air is musty and tight. She pushes herself up and sits, glancing over at Bun-Bun, who sleeps peacefully in their pen. She rests her face in her hands and sighs. It isn't fair, she thinks. The pleasant dreams only make it hurt worse.

If only things were different.















# VIOLET

by MEG

'-And that's why MY dream is to be a police officer, because I think that saving people is absolutely my calling!'

Scattered applause. The kid at the front of her class takes an arrogant bow, and Aubrey can't help but scowl in response. She's never liked him - can't even honestly remember his name, not even if she runs through the class list mentally like she did when she was nine and trying to recall who she'd left off her list of Christmas cards.

She looks at Bootlicker Kid's empty desk and counts clockwise, one two three four five six until she reaches her own, and hopes desperately that the teacher will have the good grace to do the same so they miraculously won't have time for her presentation this class - or even the next, if Mikhael - the Maverick, as he's been insisting for a good few months now - takes as much time as she expects him to. There's only twenty or so minutes left. She can dream. Maybe if that happens, she'll have time to actually make a few presentation slides to rely on and make the whole thing less brain-numbing.

'Okay, Aubrey, you're up next!'

Damn.

She looks at the teacher in shock, and then away, and then back at the teacher, who's flashing her a shit-eating grin and beckoning her to the front of the classroom.

She complies, but not without a dramatic sigh and a good thirty seconds spent trying to wrangle her conveniently tangled backpack from around the leg of her chair to grab her hastily cut out cue cards.

'I didn't, uh, prepare any slides-'

Her teacher smiles reassuringly, and it makes her want to detach her own fist and throw it so hard into his teeth that he swallows them.

'That's okay,' he says. 'We're more than happy just to hear you talk for a couple minutes.'

She sighs, drags a stool over from next to the teacher's computer, and throws herself down onto it.

'Uh, hi,' she starts. Man, screw presentations. They were totally invented to irritate the shit out of everybody with common sense.

'I'm Aubrey-'

'We know, genius,' heckles some random guy she's never spoken to from the desk behind hers. She glares daggers at him.

'I'm Aubrey, and this is my presentation. Uh, you asked for us to talk about our dreams, so here I am doing that, I guess.'



She glances sideways at her teacher, who shoots her a big thumbs-up. God, let this be over with soon. She just has to talk for, like, two minutes. She flips over the second card in her pile.

'I didn't really know how to interpret the task, actually, because you can say what are your dreams? and have that mean, like, two completely different things, and people have spoken about both of them today. I mean, we had Kim earlier talking about one dream she had where we went to pick some flowers and then got swallowed by that whale, right? And then, uh, the policeman talk, like your dream as in your goal, in the future. So, I thought I'd go with, um, the first one, since I don't really have any idea of what I wanna do with my life.'

Next cue card. She looks underneath the scribbled out paragraph of notes and towards the words she'd scratched down in a panic and underlined frantically after hearing more and more tales of lighthearted, funny dreams from her classmates.

#### JUST LIE.

'So, the most memorable dream I've ever had was a few years ago. I did some research and apparently dreams are influenced way more by things happening in your real life than I thought.' She shakes her head slightly, as if to dismiss the thought. 'But this dream was totally out there, so I don't think, um, that's the case. I was sitting in a treehouse with some of my friends. It was really hot outside, so we had a couple of popsi-cles, and we were enjoying the sunshine. There was a breeze that knocked a couple of things over, so we had to repair a photo frame, and then we-'

The wind blew through the gaps in the wood that Sunny's dad had left as a window and sent the crudely patterned, moth-eaten curtains swinging through into the treehouse's interior, knocking one of the shelves off of a wall and sending the photo frame that it held crashing down onto the floor, smashing the glass and tearing the photo inside for good measure.

She couldn't see anyone else - they disappeared as soon as the storm started, as if they weren't her friends at all but pieces of scattered loose leaf paper that had been swept away by the wind altogether. She walked forwards, eyes trained on the photograph on the floor, not daring even for a second to look away; like if she did, it'd disappear without a trace too. She'd been the one to put the photo there in the first place: a cute candid shot taken by Basil of the whole group of them sat playing by the roadside. Kel was rubbing sunscreen into Hero's face, Mari laughing, arms draped over his shoulders. Sunny was grinning, and Aubrey faced side-on to look at Kel, her face scrunched up in mock disgust.

They weren't there anymore. Hero was gone, as were Kel and Sunny. Mari remained; she was standing, contorted unsettlingly, arms still outstretched as if she was holding desperately onto something that wasn't there. She wasn't laughing; there was an eerie expression on her face, as if she was in pain, and a red ring - a jump rope - pulled taut around her neck.

Aubrey's eyes followed the red line across the page until it ended, the handle in her own tight grip, her eyes widened maniacally, a frenzied grin on her face.



-sat down together and had some lemonade.'

'That sounds like a lovely dream, Aubrey,' her teacher interrupted from the side. 'Do you know why it stuck out to you so much? Which part of it was memorable for you?'

She sighs, wiping a bead of sweat from her hairline and hoping with everything she has that her classmates are too tired to notice the moisture forming in her eyes.

'I, uh, I'm not sure. I just think it's hard to pick a favorite dream when none of them are particularly memorable, you know?'

-

The walk to the church isn't far and has always been familiar. Aubrey slips through its back door, nodding hello to the old lady she sees sitting by her husband a lot, and makes her way to the back corner of the cemetery as soon as she can.

'Hi, Mari,' she says, placing an old jacket on the grass beside the gravestone and sitting cross-legged on top. 'No flowers today, I'm sorry. They were super expensive for some reason. Supply and demand, right?'

She can almost hear Mari's laughter in response, imagines her grinning and clutching her chest as she giggles. Her hands move to her neck, her face contorts. Aubrey stops imagining.

'We had the presentations I was talking to you about last week today in class. They weren't anything special.' She pulls a face, remembering Bootlicker Kid's stupid anecdotes.

'Some guy went on and on for like ten minutes about how his huge goal is to work with the police. Kim was talking about a weird kind of surreal dream she had involving us and a huuuge whale.


'You'd like her a lot, I think,' Aubrey smiles softly, moving one hand to rest gently on Mari's grave. 'You'd like all of my new friends, even though they're not much like Kel and the rest of them. Maybe that's why I do like them so much.'

The sun is beginning to set, and the old lady picks up her handbag and waves goodbye as she walks back into the church. Aubrey folds her jacket into a makeshift pillow and lays down on the grass.

'I know you're probably telling me that I shouldn't have lied,' she admits in a hushed not-quite-whisper. 'Or at least that I should have told them about a completely fake dream, and not tried to make a real one less scary, but I'm not great at making up stories. Like, sunshine and popsicles and lemonade? Nobody believed that, Mari. It was embarrassing.

Or I should've gone with the other definition of dream all along and spoke about some kind of stupid average future plan, like going to college and being a teacher or a lawyer or something equally mind-numbingly boring. But that's not me, Mari, so you can't get mad. I don't know what I wanna do. I just wanna be a teenager and do stupid teenager things like throwing rocks at things and scaring little kids with my friends because we're being super loud in the park. Or go shopping with you, or play in the lake, or dye our hair dumb pretty colors like we promised just because we feel like it.'





Her hand shoots up to wipe away a stray tear that she didn't even realise was falling. 'But I spent the whole of this week worrying about these dumb presentations, and that made me remember all the nightmares, and now I'm scared they'll come back, Mari, and I don't want them to.' Aubrey pulls herself up and sits head-on to the grave, as if the pseudo face-to-face contact will help her get through to Mari, six feet under, or Mari, in the clouds above looking down, or Mari, in the mangled photograph, jump rope pulled tight, clawing out for help into an abyss that holds nothing.

'I don't want to feel guilty anymore,' she sobs. 'I know it wasn't my fault, and I know that we couldn't have stopped you, but I don't know what to do.'

Like every night, she cries in the grass until one of the church janitors comes to lock up for the day, and like every night, she sneaks into her bedroom and continues until she falls asleep and dreams of nothing but black.

-

She dyes her hair a bright shocking pink the next day and wears the stains on her hands with pride when she opens the door to Kim at dead-on 4pm, whose eyes are almost blown out with worry.

'You weren't at school,' she stutters. 'Are you okay?'


'Uh, duh,' Aubrey replies, running one hand through her new hair. I was working on my dream. My speech was awful, and it got me thinking. I wanna be a hairdresser.'

'Are you serious?' Kim replies, eyes narrow with doubt. 'Aubrey, I think you're awesome, but I don't know how many people are gonna wanna pay you to make their heads bright pink. Also, you miiiight wanna invest in some gloves.'

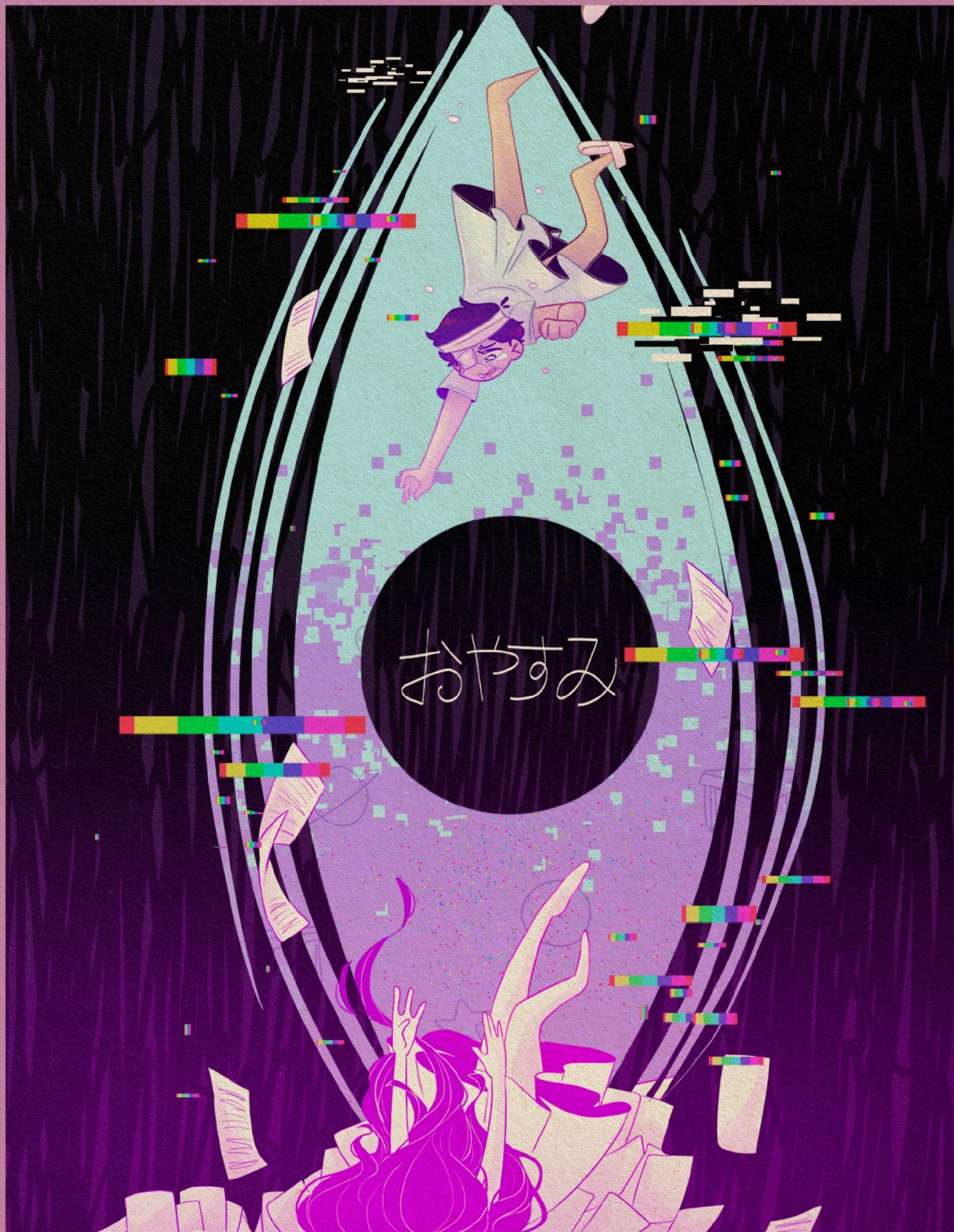
'I don't care, Kim.' Aubrey shakes her head, grinning slightly. 'If I don't have a market of boring old people, that's better, right? Because then I'm just Dressing the Hair of fun people like me.'

'Well, okay,' Kim says, not missing a beat. 'You're gonna need practise, right? Do mine. I wanna go... purple.'

Aubrey looks at her and smiles. She thinks, Mari would love you. She thinks, Mari does love me. And she's proud of me, and I don't need to feel guilty anymore.



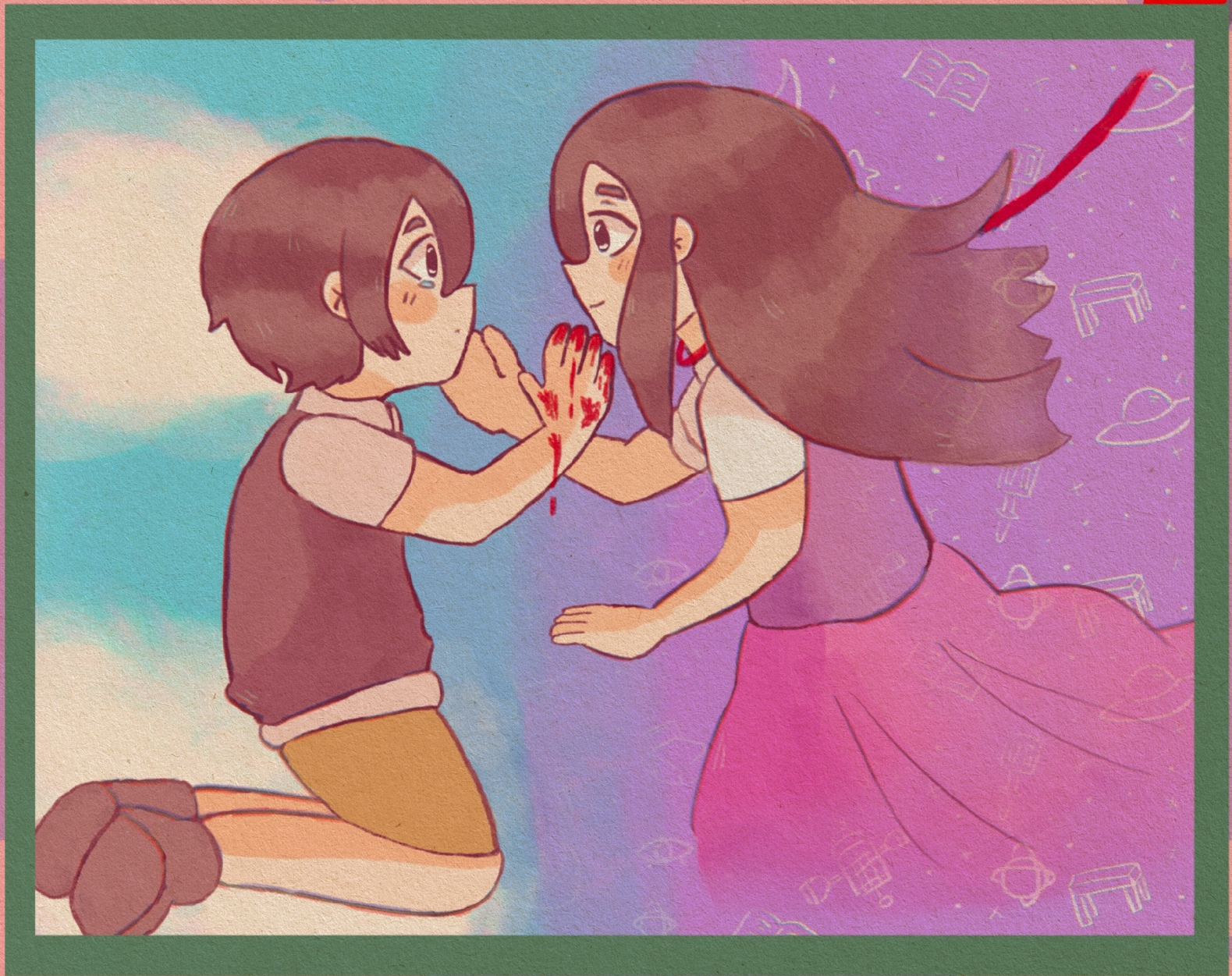
















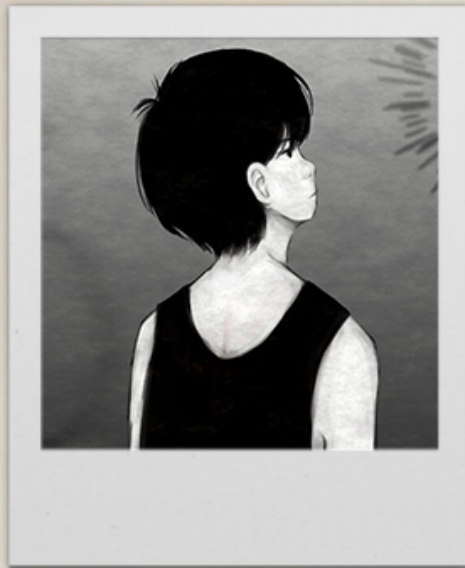






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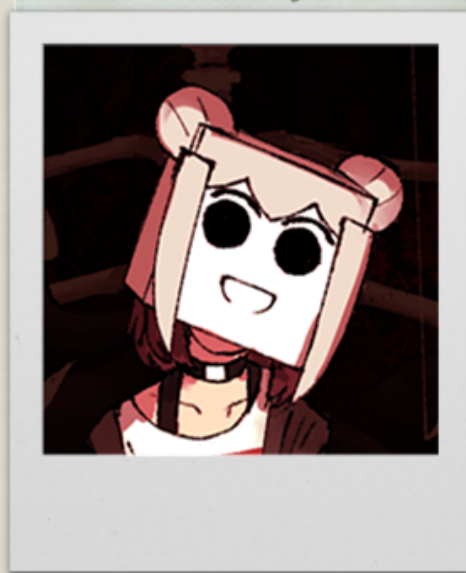
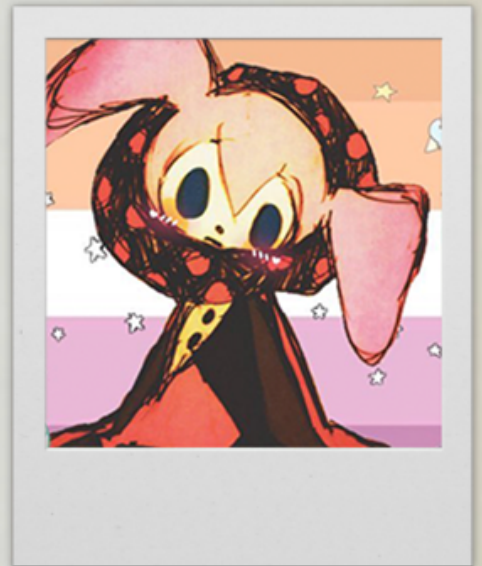
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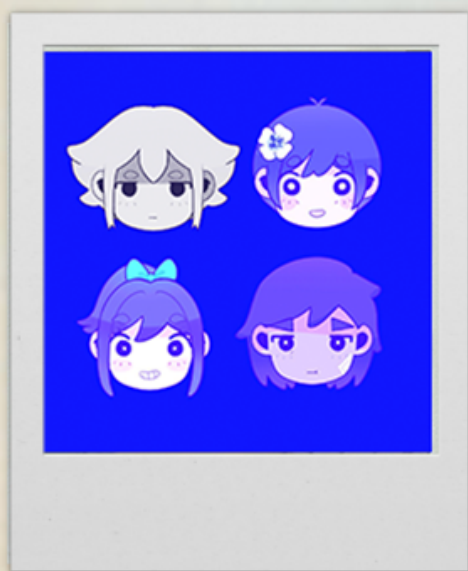
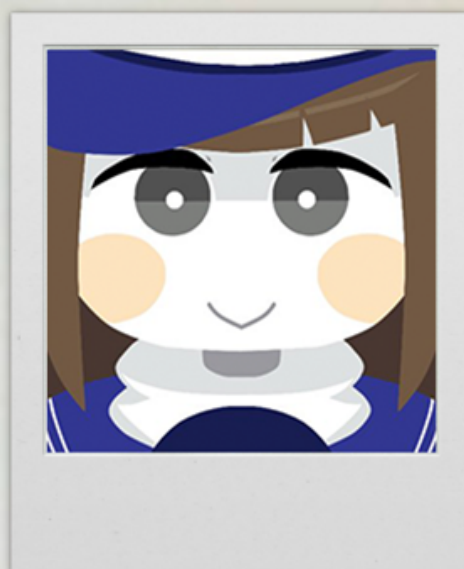
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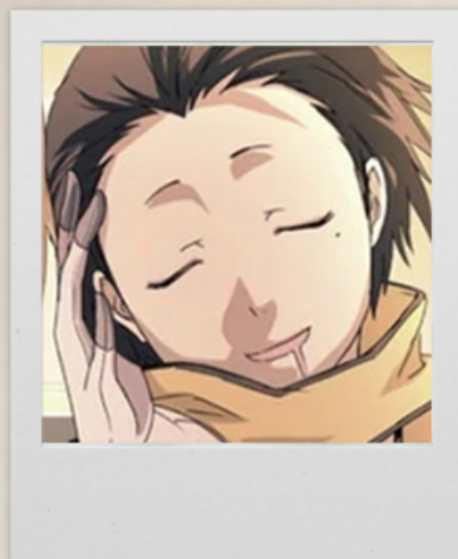
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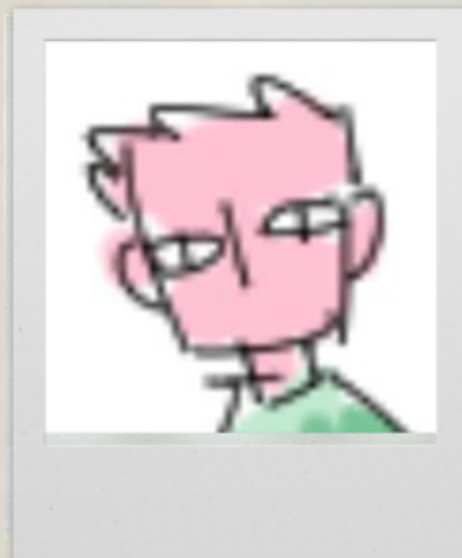




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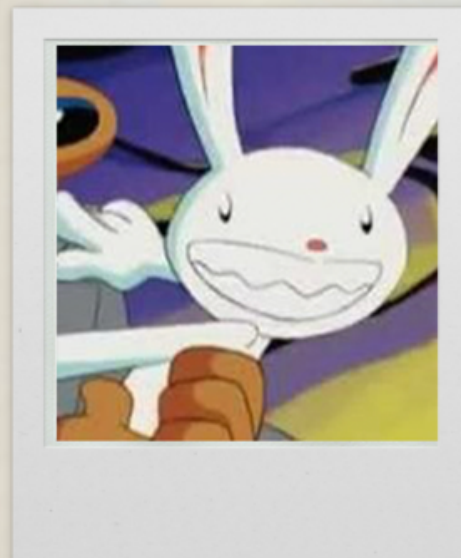


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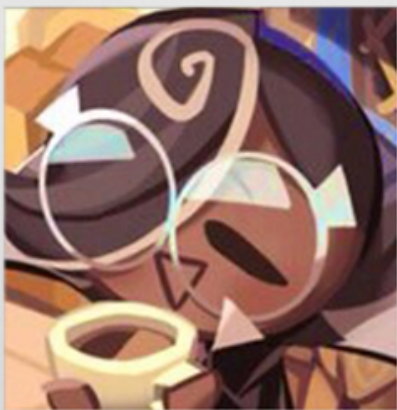


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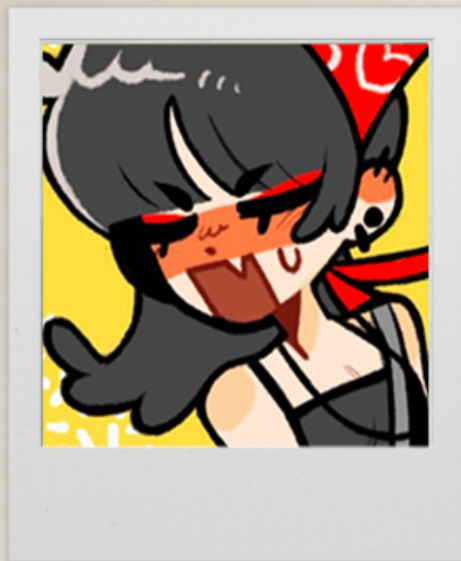


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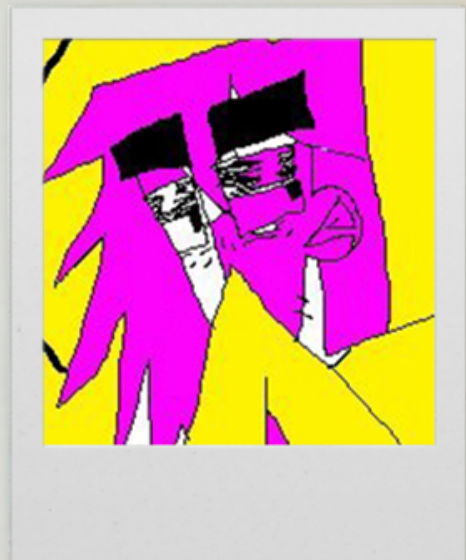




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